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Vietnamese Market Place

Stuart Alan Alperin is surrounded by natives.

When Hanoi? *Where United States Misses Bus in Viet--1*

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While military operations have been going better than expected in recent months, there has been some doubts as to the prospects of American victory in Viet Nam.

The writer—a resident of Newton and former Army officer—has just returned from Viet Nam where he was working for the United States Government in a highly sensitive field.

In his daily work Alperin lived with the people of Viet Nam and had close contact with their officials.

The following article is the first in a series written exclusively for the Boston Globe and pinpointing some of the areas where our efforts in Viet Name have failed.

By STUART ALAN ALPERIN

No matter what turmoil might reign within the ruling circles of South Viet Nam, Washington must recognize that there is a vociferous element in South Viet Nam whose ambition is to unite both the north and the south into one nation.

Indeed, national unity and Vietnamese brotherhood are two of the Viet Cong's major selling points.

Hanoi was the seat of Vietnamese culture before 1954. Many of the current Vietnamese leaders were either born in the north or were southerners sent to the north for their education.

The very idea of marching out Hanoi holds an almost messianic hope for the Vietnamese nationalists.

One province chief stated that he would relinquish all his present power and prestige to be granted the privilege of waging the war north of the demilitarized zone.

With the scrapping of the 1954 Geneva Accords, total victory has become the goal of many South Vietnamese. They see a divided Germany and a divided Korea. They are experiencing the tragedy of a divided Viet Nam.

National unity, that same ideal which the United States fought for with blood from 1861-1865, is the ever-present dream of the Vietnamese patriots.

During the Winter of 1965 the morale of both the South Vietnamese people and their American advisors was approaching its lowest ebb.

The Viet Cong controlled the countryside, the highways, the railroads, and the peasants. They left the provincial towns to the government, one isolated from another.

South Viet Nam had become a nation of 100 besieged West Berlins.

Christmas Eve the American Bachelor Officers Quarters, the Brink, was bombed. In January the Buddhists

Continued

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were rioting from Saigon to Hue.

More than one Vietnamese official was quoted as saying, "things are going from bad to worse."

Then, early one Sunday morning in February, the Viet Cong launched a series of attacks upon American outposts in the central highlands.

The Communists were putting the American "paper tiger" to the test.

The reply of the United States was quick and strong. But, was it strong enough?

All dependents of American officialdom were efficiently evacuated. The air forces of South Viet Nam and the United States began their "limited" bombing of strategic and tactical routes of communication between the North and South. The infamous Ho Chi Minh trail would be bombed.

When the now Premier Ky returned from the north, where he had led his air force on a successful strike mission, he was welcomed by his countrymen as a hero.

Now that the war was being actively and overtly carried to the north, there was a significant change in the morale and spirit of the South Vietnamese.

Whether one was in Saigon, the beach resort of Vung

Tau, or a beleaguered provincial town, dozens of people could be found huddled around radio sets listening to the latest news reports of allied air strikes on North Viet Nam.

The question which was always thrown at the American was, "When HANOI?"

Yet, the American community knew that Hanoi was not to be bombed. The world was informed by everyone from the President on down what our tactics were in carrying the war to the north.

The Vietnamese people were also informed, but they persisted in believing Ho Chi Minh's capital would be destroyed.

Finally, on March 30, the American Embassy in Saigon was bombed by Viet Cong terrorists. The tragedy was heralded as another Pearl Harbor. Surely Hanoi would be subjected to instant retaliation.

Many Vietnamese thought American reaction would be so strong that the war would be concluded by the end of the year.

When the wife of a Vietnamese official questioned an American about how much longer the war would last, he replied, "a long, long time."

Once again the spirits of South Viet Nam's people sank low. The south was sacrificing its blood; the north, its steel and mortar.

OCT 10 1965